The Ten Virgins

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Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25: 1-13).

Many people have tried to interpret this parable. Some of the interpretations are similar, and some are totally different. Which one is the right one? The right interpretation should be the one which is supported by the verses in the Bible or has the basic biblical concepts and can be understood logically.

First, this parable was told by Jesus in order to prepare His disciples for His departure and to warn them to be watchful for His second coming. In Matthew 24, His disciples asked Him about the time the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, the signs of His second coming, and of the end of the world.

In response to those questions, Jesus gave many signs and admonitions. He also told His disciples that His second coming (at rapture) will be like a thief. Thus, He warned them to be watchful. In order that His disciples may live in harmony, He told them the parable of the faithful and wise servant and the evil servant, and also about wise and foolish virgins.

Second, these two parables are still included in “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” which are actually about the church. From this we can deduce who are meant by the bridegroom, the bride, and the virgins who were going to meet the bridegroom.

Based on other passages in the Bible, the Bridegroom must be Christ Himself and the bride must be the church (Ephesians 5: 22-23). To the church of Corinth Paul wrote, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (II Corinthians 11: 2). The New Testament churches are the future bride of Christ at the Feast of the Lamb.

If the churches are the bride, then who are the virgins that meet the bridegroom? It seems that lately, there are many groups that are waiting for the coming of Messiah, although with different understandings and concepts. Not only Christians, the Jews and Moslems are also expecting the coming of Messiah and imam mahdi. In Christianity itself, from mainstream groups up to the most heretical groups, all have a kind of concept about the second coming of Christ which differs from one another and also with different expectations. Thus, the virgins that meet the bridegroom can be the groups or everyone who are expecting the coming of the "Messiah."

Third, each of the virgins took a lamp. The lamp represents a kind of identity, witness, or worship system of each group. In the Old Testament, lamp in the tabernacle symbolized the witness of the divine truth in the symbolic worship of the Jews as the keeper of the symbolic worship of Old Testament.

The lamp in this parable symbolized a kind of worship which is held or honored by the religious groups and church denominations. Near to the second coming of Christ, many church denominations, religions and beliefs will compete in showing their lamps.

Fourth, there was the oil that enabled the fire to burn on the lamp. Some theologians interpreted the oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. But I don't agree with them, since Holy Spirit is not for sale. The only incident written in the Scripture in which somebody tried to buy Holy Spirit is that of Simon, a magician in Samaria. Then, what is actually symbolized by the oil in this parable? The Old Testament tells us the difference between oil for lamps and oil for anointment. Oil for light is not fragrant, while the anointing oil is fragrant since it is made with spices (Exodus 25: 6, Numbers 4: 16).

Since the oil in this parable is to light the lamp, then it is more appropriate to interpret it as the truth which forms the basis of each group's witness to the outer world. The lamp will only shine its light if there is oil in it, and so the witness to the outer world will only be meaningful if there is truth or sound biblical doctrines in it.

The next question is, can truth be traded? Well, Solomon was the first person to market it in Proverbs 23: 23, "Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding."

Next, let us understand the purpose or teaching of Christ in telling this parable. It is clear that in the parable, God said that there were ten virgins who were going to meet the bridegroom. Just like I said before, there are many Christian denominations, Jewish and Moslem groups who are still waiting for their Messiah or imam mahdi.

All groups lift up their "lamps." Most of them don't even care whether their lamps contain oil or not. Christianity should be Jehovah's program in the era of spiritual worship which is separate from physical symbolic worship in the Old Testament. However, there are still many Christians who keep the symbolic physical rituals in their worship. This is just like a lamp without oil.

Since John the Baptist appeared pointing to the Savior, we have entered into a worship system in which we worship in spirit and in truth. But there are many who still worship in symbols and in rituals. We should worship with our hearts, but there are many who still worship God physically.

The Apostle Paul in II Timothy 3: 5 wrote, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." What Paul really meant was that at end times, many people are trapped to worship God physically, not spiritually. Many people put more emphasis on ritual formalities rather than the true biblical doctrines. Some even don't care at all about doctrines just like the virgins who did

not bring oil for their lamps. Because they are afraid of debates, some avoid talking about doctrines and replace them with philosophy, nice words, and devotional stories that touch the hearts.

Christians are amazed with the grandness of church buildings, the number of church members, the size of the organization, or in short the outer beauty, just like a beautiful lamp but without oil. A grand lamp made of gold will not be useful without oil. That kind of lamp will only be useful for decoration; it can even hurt those who bump into it just like a big and grand church with a false doctrine. The grandness of the building is only used to house concerts; it can be likened unto a beautiful lamp with no oil.

Many Christians don't care about truth. This can be seen from the lack of enthusiasms towards doctrines. Some of them think that since talking about doctrines will lead into serious debates, it is better to talk about something else. Actually, it is better to enter into debate, even a serious one, to get to the truth rather than avoiding it by talking about unimportant things. E-mails usually forwarded to pastors through mailing lists contain stories about human life and witness which are subjective. Many quote the "wise" words from various people, even atheists.

If debates arise whenever we talk about doctrines, does it mean that we should not talk about doctrines at all? Shouldn't everyone want to be very sure about a teaching before believing it? Aren't the debates going to provide meaningful inputs for someone seeking for truth in making his decision? Someone who has the false belief and defends it vigorously is still better than someone with no belief. At least he has a faith. This kind of person will be willing to change his view when he encounters a teaching more true than the one he currently believes.

Lately, I also encountered many pastors who don't dare to read or listen to other people's view on a teaching. They seem to turn deaf ears to opinions which differ from theirs. How will they know that the teaching they currently hold is the truest? Can a boxer convince others and himself that he is the best boxer by refusing to fight other boxers? The real truth is the one that has gone through many tests. If there are ten pearl sellers, nine sell fake pearls and one sells original pearls, anyone who wants to buy pearl must insist on proving the originality of the pearls he is going to buy. For the buyers, originality test will not harm them in any way; it will even benefit them greatly. Theological debates will not harm any truth seekers; on the contrary, it is very beneficial. The test will only be harmful for the fake pearl sellers. They will absolutely resist originality test. Likewise, people who are not teaching the truth will resist doctrinal debates; they even prohibit their followers to listen to doctrines that are different from the ones they are teaching. Dear readers, if your pastor told you not to read *The Sword of the Spirit*, you should start pondering.

So, buy the truth, the oil that makes your lamp shine. Don't wait until it is too late just like the five foolish virgins in God's parable. Don't just worship God physically without understanding the truth. It means that you only have lamp without oil in it.

Many Christians do not understand why they recite the confession of faith which state that they believe the Catholic/Universal/Am Church to be the true church while at the same time they are protesting against the Catholic Church. Is that really the confession of faith from the apostles? History proved that this confession of faith appeared in the fourth century. Many more Christians do not understand why at the end of each service their "pastor" will raise his hands to bless the congregation.

They don't understand that this is a priestly practice which is forbidden in the New Testament time since every believer is a priest unto himself and Jesus Christ is the chief priest. This priestly practice was brought by Martin Luther from Catholic Church that acknowledges priesthood along with its position and practices. In the Old Testament, a man named Korah tried to be a priest, Jehovah was wrathful towards him so that he was swallowed by the earth.

Dear readers, buy the truth. Don't be a Christian without right understanding; or like a lamp without oil. This kind of lamp will not shine in darkness; it is only useful for decoration. The same applies to church liturgy which is not based on truth. It is only decoration without meaning.

Sometimes, the price to obtain truth can be very high. It is not surprising since we spend a lot to provide good education for our children. And since the price keeps increasing, Solomon told us not to sell it.

After giving more than one hundred doctrinal seminars, I have received comments from the attendees that the doctrines taught by GRAPHE are very biblical and logical. But they could not decide immediately to receive and implement them for many reasons. Some thought it hard to leave their church since they have a lot of friends there. Some would not leave because they were afraid to be fired from their jobs. Others faced threats of divorce from their spouses.

So, you see that the price of truth varies from one person to another. Some can choose to embrace the truth without any significant hindrance, while others must pay dearly for it. However, anyone who defers the decision to buy the truth will SURELY suffer a huge loss, since the price of the truth will keep hiking.

To buy the "oil" of truth, not only do you need to pay dearly for it, but you also need time to buy it, just like the five foolish virgins in the parable. When the moment is crucial, you may not have enough time to buy it. Once you have the chance to buy the truth, you have to make your decision, since there may not be a second chance. I have witnessed a lot of people who deferred making the decision to choose the truth and move to a biblical church for whatever reasons ended up not making the decision at all. They became more and more insensitive to the truth, thus they are deceived even further. Finally, the bridegroom will come, and this kind of people will surely not join the Feast of the Lamb. So beware!